

A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan Under the Umbrella of SAARC

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Abstract:

South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation was formed on 8th December 1985 by Zia-ur-Rahman. Pakistan was reluctant to concede free trade area concessions to India until Kashmir issue was settled and Pakistan could not take necessary steps towards the trade with South Asian states due to its Kashmir centric approach. The SAARC countries decided to integrate the economic cooperation under the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA). This agreement was signed in April 1993 at Dhaka summit and came into force in Dec. 1995. Both the nations have tried to remove the Visa restrictions upon the people. India asserts that the protection of environment is a common imperative for all human kind. Both the countries need to deal with the issue of terrorism jointly. Because the attack on Musharraf and assassination of Benazir Buthoo are a clear indication that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism so is India its victim. Samjhuta Express (2007), Terrorist attack on parliament (2001) and Mumbai terrorist attack (2008) are well known examples.

Key words:

SAARC; INDO-PAK; SAPTA; TERRORISM; TOURISM

Introduction

South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation was formed on 8th December 1985 by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal,

Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and Afghanistan. Its Headquarter is situated at Kathmandu. The concept of SAARC was first motivated by Zia-ur-Rahman, president of Bangladesh in 1980 to develop cooperation among the regional countries of south Asia. Its aim is to promote the welfare of people of South Asia, strengthen collective self-reliance and promote active collaboration with international and regional organization.

Objective of study:

1. To analysis polices of India and Pakistan towards terrorism.
2. To know the role of India and Pakistan in Environmental issue.
3. To examine the role of India and Pakistan towards poverty tourism and other fields

Methodology:

For the purpose of the study, both published and unpublished secondary data has been utilized. The data of indo-Pak relations were also analyzed. The data is collected from various journals Contemporary south Asia, journal of political studies and peace and democracy in south Asia etc.

Discussion

India and Pakistan both are south Asian states. They have common history, highly dependent on each other and have much contributed towards SAARC but unfortunately the relations between the two neighboring countries remained suspended since partition in 1947 and fought various wars (1965, 1972, and 1999). Immediately after these terrible wars, both the countries tried to develop their relations through negotiations. Thus India and Pakistan are the neighboring and developing countries of SAARC region but India is comparably large in terms of size, population, GDP etc. and India try to develop SAARC as a regional defense organization of South Asian states.

Indo-Pak relations and the accompanied mistrust and suspicion between the two countries have greatly hampered the process of regional cooperation. Both the countries however have been able to use the regional forum to further their economic and social links with each other. India was suspicious of a western hand when the concept of SAARC was propounded. It was also apprehensive that the organization perhaps would provide a forum for ganging up of its neighbors. Similarly Pakistan expectation from SAARC has been limited. There were two main factors for Pakistan to join SAARC. First Pakistan strengthens its

relations with other small countries; secondly Pakistan also thought the forum could be used to deflect the weight of India's influence.

Introducing free trade under SAARC has been on the agenda for a few years but no concrete step has been taken due to individual differences among the member countries. Initially, Pakistan was reluctant to concede free trade area concessions to India until Kashmir issue was settled and Pakistan could not take necessary steps towards the trade with South Asian states due to its Kashmir centric approach. Pakistan could not take steps to remove tariff barriers because concerned that Indian market would be access whereas India wants to free trade links towards South Asian states but without collaboration and cooperation of Pakistan it will not yield good result.

Economic relations

The SAARC countries decided to integrate the economic cooperation under the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA). This agreement was signed in April 1993 at Dhaka summit and came into force in Dec. 1995. SAPTA was the origin of economic cooperation in the region. However it was because of India that preferential trading arrangement leading to the free trade area, which was primarily envisaged as 1st step transition, including custom union, common market and economic union. As compare to

Pakistan has always feared that such regional cooperation; could result in a gradual one-sided economic dependence of Pakistan and other smaller South Asian neighbors of India.

South Asia Free Trade Agreement was introduced during the 12th summit at Islamabad. This agreement was to extend the economic relation, covering 1.4 billion people in the area with specific products of regional countries in the free trade areas. SAARC chamber of commerce and Industry (CCI) is an important forum to bring closer the members in this particular field. Pakistan was nominated and headed the chamber after fourteen years. SAFTA went into force on January 1, 2006. It was suggested to develop trade relations among members of SAARC particularly India and Pakistan were required to bring the duties down to 20% by 2007. Thus India and Pakistan are important due to their centrality in terms of location, size and power resources which is critical viable in determining relationship. Both countries have to extend assurance to each other of economic and political goodwill and both the countries are in a position in South Asia to find the path towards the peace of region. India and Pakistan share IT cooperation links since the emergence of SAARC and has continued through time. India has established itself as a major player in the information technology segment.

The software export boon which began in the late 1980's has been shift in the mode of delivering from outside to offshore. Two changes namely web-based export delivering and import liberalizations made this shift possible. While as the software industry in Pakistan is still in its nascent stages through it has a huge potential to emerge as a major software exporting and training Centre. India and Pakistan could enter into joint venture to tap the global market for software. The national association of software and service companies (NAASCOM) of India and Pakistan software House Association (PASHA) have taken an initiative towards this end. In recent years India has emerged as leading supplier in the information and technology enabled services (ITES).

Tourism

Both the countries of the south Asia hold immense potential in tourism. In recent years both the nations have tried to remove the Visa restrictions upon the people. Pakistan issued 300 visas per month to Indian people and India also granted around 1,000 visas to Pakistani people and recent bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad since April 2005 is a major step in this direction.

Environment issues

The south Asian states recognized that the degradation of environment has emerged as a major global concern. India asserts that the protection of

environment is a common imperative for all human kind. The main responsibility in this regard rest on developed countries, since most of the emission of pollutants originate in those countries and since they also have greater capacity for taking or facilitating the corrective measures. Both India and Pakistan called on the international community to address the question of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and life style which lead to environment degradation. They are of the view that environmental standards applicable to developed countries may have excessive and unwarranted economic or social costs if applied in developing countries. India laid stress to adequate new and additional resources need for developing countries to pursue an environmentally sensitive process of development that will banish the underlying causes of environmental degradation, poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Such resources should be transfers to developing countries on an assured basis together with environmentally sound technology at preferential and concessional terms.

India and Pakistan Problem of Terrorism

All the countries of south Asia except Maldives are facing the problem of terrorism. In the context of India and Pakistan, the issue has become more

complex given the Kashmir issue. Although president Musharraf condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and he called it grave threat to civil society during the 11th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu. He made a distinction between acts of legitimate resistance and freedom struggle and acts of terrorism. It is obvious that Pakistan has its own compulsions in agreeing to additional protocols. There were various indications from western countries that pressurized Pakistan to take measures to deal with the issue of religious militancy and cross border terrorism. Though the additional protocols to the SAARC conventions on terrorism has been added, it would be difficult to implement especially in the indo-Pak context. Riaz Khokhar said, "While we are mindful of our obligations of combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, we will not compromise on our vital national interests". Adding further, "We are not in the business of building bridges if there is a gap, all are welcome to keep their own interpretations on the subject". It is important to briefly mention Sri-lanka's initiative to reach a consensus on the additional protocol on terrorism. The problem is quite clear in the interpretation of terrorism according to national interest of countries. Both the countries need to deal with the issue of terrorism jointly. Because the attack on Musharraf and assassination of Benazir Buthoo are a clear indication

that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism so is India its victim. Samjhuta Express (2007), Terrorist attack on parliament (2001) and Mumbai terrorist attack (2008) are well known examples.

Conclusion:

SAARC has guarded and addressed the controversial areas on side line of its platform by extending opportunity of interaction and contacts between the two countries. Apart from this it has also strengthened mutual understanding and goodwill between the south Asian countries. A number of initiatives have been taken by the two states under the auspices of SAARC for the growth, cultural development and collaboration in social, cultural, technical and scientific fields. The fundamental asymmetry at varied levels has not been addressed yet. India and Pakistan have long been victims of their skeptical mindsets. However SAARC is the best alternate hope to improve the situation and maintain peace, prosperity and stability between the two states.

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